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MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Director, Current Intelligence

SUBJECT: Watch Committee

On the basis of several weeks' attendance at the IAC Watch Committee and of conversations with a number of people who have observed it for longer than I and who are equally concerned over its deficiencies, I should like to go on record with a few comments and three suggestions.

Comments:

1. The present method of arriving at an agenda, whereby the various participating agencies submit their own suggestions and then are presented with [redacted] only when the meeting opens, is inefficient. It results in two check lists which are overloaded with trivia to start with, and many of whose items must be discussed without preparation by everyone except the contributing agency.

2. The chairmanship rests with the wrong agency. The Chairman is a representative of G-2, the bulk of the contributions are from G-2, and to me the whole proceeding acquires too strong a G-2 flavor. The proper moderator for such a discussion is the CIA, as the coordinator of all intelligence.

3. Largely as a result of the two conditions listed above, the discussion inevitably becomes overloaded with military minutiae which are both confusing and time-consuming. The Watch Committee reports, even though on the whole they are an excellent job of boiling down, clearly reveal the extent to which small details clutter up the discussion.

4. The committee seems constitutionally unable to reach real conclusions, and is at least reluctant to underline the significance of single indications or combinations of indications. In part this may be due to a conception that the committee's job is only to present the evidence. If this conception is correct, it would seem that the committee's function should be expanded. The failure to reach conclusions, however, stems largely from the fact that with two check lists there is no possibility of coming to an all-source estimate or prediction.

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5. Less important, the committee conceives its jurisdiction to be limited to Communist developments and intentions, and in consequence is reluctant to discuss developments which for the moment, at least, have no Communist or Soviet connotation, but which potentially might affect the national security. This seems to leave a wide gap. Any situation--for instance, tension between India and Pakistan--which carries the seeds of turmoil is one which Communism potentially can exploit, and thus is an element of vulnerability in the free world.

Suggestions:

1. The committee should be reorganized (under CIA chairmanship, if possible) along lines like the following: the secretariat should include a staff composed of one qualified representative of each member agency, to be centrally located and to constitute, in effect, a subcommittee in constant session and able, in a crisis, quickly to summon the full committee; these subcommittee members, maintaining close contact with their respective agencies, would draw up, for submission to each agency by noon each Tuesday, a suggested Watch Committee Report of Indications; the full committee, having examined the draft report, would meet as usual on Wednesdays to discuss, supplement, and amend.

2. The Watch Committee report should be all source, and should contain as its last item a section on conclusions, to be freshly drafted each week and to represent more than a stereotyped tribute to Communist ability to launch an attack where, when, and how the Kremlin desires. If it proves impossible to gain agreement to an all-source report, to be supplemented by a sanitized version for wider distribution, this failure should not prevent the committee's reaching such conclusions as it feels are justified.

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3. The committee's scope should include all indications, whether or not they are connected with Soviet or Communist strategy, which might affect the national interest of the United States. This suggestion falls outside the scope of a revision of the existing committee, and presumably would involve a revision of the committee's charter.

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cc: Chief, Intelligence Staff

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